



May 20, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

Earlier this month, you recognized an important symbol of American liberty, and the Department's initiative to allow visitors into the crown of the Statue of Liberty was widely applauded. This week, as the summer vacation season begins, we urge you to again take decisive action—this time to protect one of the most visible symbols of America's natural heritage and a much loved vacation destination, the Grand Canyon.

More than a century ago, the great conservation President Theodore Roosevelt went to the Grand Canyon's north rim and called for its protection. "Leave it as it is," he said. "You cannot improve on it. The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it." Roughly a decade later, President Woodrow Wilson signed landmark legislation to establish the Grand Canyon National Park.

Because of their foresight, today roughly five million people from around the world visit the Grand Canyon each year to witness its majestic splendor and enjoy this uniquely endowed natural museum. The National Park Service estimates that this World Heritage site contributes thousands of jobs and more than \$750 million annually to the economy of the Colorado Plateau. The Colorado River, the flow of which has shaped the canyon's dramatic twists and turns, sustains a remarkable range of fish, plant and wildlife species. It also is an important source of water for more than 25 million people downstream including residents of the Las Vegas and Los Angeles Metropolitan Areas.

But today this crown jewel of the National Park System and wonder of the world is threatened.

As you know, thanks to an outdated federal law enacted in the 19th century, the mining of gold, uranium and other metals is given priority over almost everything else on most public lands in the West. This antiquated policy, designed for pioneers and pack mules, has resulted in a rash of new mining claims staked near the Park boundaries.

Last year, the House Committee on Natural Resources, at the urging of state and local officials, conservationists, tribal groups and major water utilities, called on the Department of Interior to withdraw roughly one million acres of public land in the Grand Canyon environs from new claimstaking. Such a withdrawal would not impact existing valid claims, but would assure that critical

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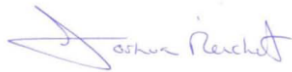
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non-mining values are recognized and protected. Because the previous administration took no action on the withdrawal request, however, the Grand Canyon and its lifeblood, the Colorado River, remain at risk from mining and associated industrial development.

Now, as families across America are making their summer vacation plans, many will heed the words of President Roosevelt, who described the Grand Canyon “as the one great sight which every American ... should see.” To ensure the park’s protection for this and future generations of Americans, We urge you to place the national forest and other public lands surrounding the Grand Canyon National Park off limits to new mining claims. Taking this decisive action would send an important signal that President Barack Obama is committed to changing the way our public lands have been managed. It would also demonstrate that, like Roosevelt, he is determined to protect this wondrous gift “for all who come after.”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joshua Reichert". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'J'.

Joshua Reichert
Managing Director